

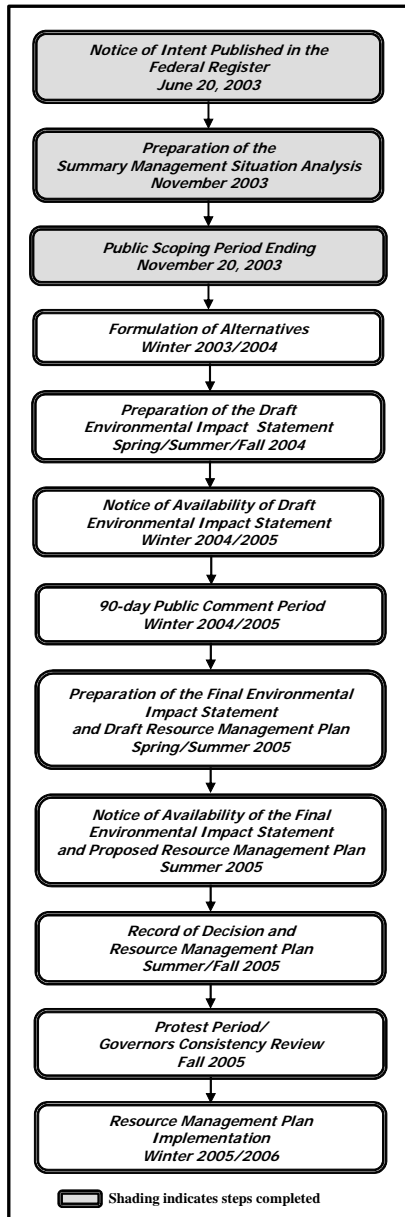


# Casper Resource Management Plan Revision Newsletter

2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY 82604-2968  
(307) 261-7600 [www.blm.gov/rmp/casper](http://www.blm.gov/rmp/casper)

January 2004

## Where do we go from here?



## Letter from the Field Manager

Dear Friends,

Thanks to all of you who participated in the scoping process for the Casper Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision. Your comments and information were helpful in identifying issues and concerns about the management of BLM-managed public lands in the Casper planning area.

The RMP revision process began with the publication of the *Federal Register* Notice of Intent on June 20, 2003. Four public scoping meetings were held during November in Casper, Douglas, Torrington, and Wheatland. By the close of the scoping period, we had received hundreds of comments, most of which focused on fish and wildlife, oil and gas and mineral resources, and livestock grazing. Vegetation, lands and realty, transportation and access, cultural resources, and off-highway vehicles also received a large number of comments.

All comments received and the Scoping Report are available for public review on the Casper RMP revision website at [www.blm.gov/rmp/casper](http://www.blm.gov/rmp/casper).

### What's Next?

This is the first newsletter in a series designed to provide you with information on what is happening in the Casper RMP revision process. These newsletters should keep you current on issues and events during the revision.

Currently, we are in the "alternatives formulation" process, where we will use your comments and the planning issues and planning constraints identified to date to formulate a reasonable range of

management alternatives for evaluation in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Management alternatives focus on resolving issues identified during scoping and offer a distinct choice among potential management strategies.

Following the development of alternatives, we will conduct an in-depth analysis of each alternative to determine the impacts on the environment and planning area management situation. This analysis, referred to as the "effects analysis," will be incorporated into a Draft EIS, which is scheduled for publication in the winter of 2004/2005. There will be a 90-day review and public comment period in the winter of 2004/2005, during which you will have an opportunity to submit your comments on the Draft EIS. A Final EIS will be published in the summer of 2005, which will take your comments into consideration.

Again, thanks for your participation and comments. I invite you to remain involved throughout the RMP revision process.

Jim Murkin, Casper Field Office Manager  
Bureau of Land Management  
Casper Field Office

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## Commonly Used Acronyms

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
NOI	Notice of Intent
RMP	Resource Management Plan
NOA	Notice of Availability

### The Purpose of Scoping

Public involvement is an integral part of revising the Casper RMP and preparing the EIS. Scoping has been designed as a process by which lead agencies solicit input from the public and other interested agencies on the nature and extent of issues and impacts to be addressed in the RMP revision and the methods by which they will be examined. The official scoping period began when the NOI to revise the Platte River RMP was published in the *Federal Register* on June 20, 2003 and ended 5 months later on November 20, 2003. During the scoping period: several articles appeared in local and regional newspapers soliciting comments, a formal scoping letter was sent to the 1,104 names on the Casper Field Office mailing list, four open house-style public meetings were held at locations throughout the planning area, an official Casper RMP website went online in mid-October that provides ongoing updates and information about the revision process, and several public agencies were invited to participate in the revision process as cooperating agencies.



### How We're Using Your Comments

Upon completion of the scoping period, we analyzed your comments to identify relevant issues to address in the Casper RMP revision.

After all the comments were collected and the scoping period was closed on November 20, 2003, we performed a comment analysis to organize the comments in a way that provided more clarity as to the significant issues in the planning area. We then published a document, called the Scoping Report, which is available for your review on our website and by request from our office.

We will be using the Scoping Report to ensure that the RMP revision and EIS address significant issues important to the people who will be affected by BLM's decisions. This report does not make decisions or set forth policies; rather, it summarizes the issues received by BLM up to the end of the scoping period. Comments received after the end of the scoping period will still be considered in the next steps of the planning process.

### Summary of Comments Received During the Scoping Period

During the 5-month scoping period, we received 45 comment letters via mail, the website, or at the scoping meetings. Below is a summary of the comments received, which are categorized by revision topic. Included beneath each revision topic are the relevant preliminary planning issues that were presented by the BLM in the NOI. Comments were submitted on all of the revision topics; however, those included below represent the focus of the majority of the comments. Other comments not

included below, but that are summarized in the Scoping Report, will be considered in the next steps of the planning process.

#### Cultural Resources

- ◆ Identify threats to and adopt management actions to protect, conserve, and/or restore cultural resources.
- ◆ Ensure that historic trails are protected while still encouraging recreational use.
- ◆ Effectively incorporate and comply with the appropriate legislation and guidance on cultural resources, including Section 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the BLM's Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP) manual, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), and President Bush's "Preserve America" stewardship mandates.

#### Preliminary planning issue:

- ◆ *Management of cultural and paleontological resources, including National Historic Trails*

#### Fish and Wildlife

- ◆ Improve and protect crucial wildlife habitat and migration corridors.
- ◆ Assess and minimize the impact of resource development and roads on sensitive wildlife species and habitat.
- ◆ Continue to encourage local, regional, multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional management and coordination on wildlife issues.

#### Preliminary planning issues:

- ◆ *Wildlife habitat and management of crucial habitat and migration corridors*
- ◆ *Management and cumulative effect of land uses and human activities on threatened, endangered, candidate, and sensitive species and their habitats*

#### Lands and Realty

- ◆ Work cooperatively with landowners and coordinating agencies to determine the best management practices for small, isolated tracts of land that might be exchanged or sold to private landowners.
- ◆ Adequately and fairly address access to BLM properties with regards to efficiency, multiple uses, private property infringements, public accessibility, and the possibility of resource development.

#### Preliminary planning issues:

- ◆ *Access to and transportation on BLM lands*
- ◆ *Landownership adjustments*

**Livestock Grazing**

- ◆ Establish management programs that balance wildlife and grazing management, including habitat improvements, determining manageable pasture size, and fencing techniques.
- ◆ Continue coordination with ranchers, the public, and interested stakeholders.

*Preliminary planning issue:*

- ◆ *Livestock grazing*

**Mineral Resources**

- ◆ Carefully evaluate and consider all possible impacts of mineral development, including fish and wildlife habitat disturbance, access to public lands, surface vs. subsurface usage, socioeconomic impacts, and recreational opportunities, when assessing the future viability of resource development in specific portions of the planning area.
- ◆ Explore the compatibility of mineral exploration and development activities with recreation, wildlife, grazing, and preservation of water resources.
- ◆ Adequately and fairly assess the costs and benefits of mineral resource development in the planning area.

*Preliminary planning issue:*

- ◆ *Energy and mineral resource exploration and development*

**Off-Highway Vehicles**

- ◆ Establish an inventory of current OHV roads on BLM lands and address the probable future increase in OHV use.
- ◆ Clearly identify OHV roads, so as to prevent confusion and misuse of roads and property not specifically designated for OHVs.

*Preliminary planning issue:*

- ◆ *Recreation and off-highway vehicle management*

**Recreation**

- ◆ Manage BLM lands fairly for optimization of multiple/compatible uses.
- ◆ Consider and implement access to recreation areas that are difficult to access, such as North Platte River, historic trails, and backcountry byways.

*Preliminary planning issue:*

- ◆ *Recreation and off-highway vehicle management*

**Transportation and Access**

- ◆ Adequately and fairly assess overall road usage and development on BLM-administered public lands. Specifically, address resource exploration and development, recreational use, prevention of trespass, ease of access, and the need for (or lack of need for) road development.

- ◆ Implement a management plan that ensures future recreational use, protection of, and access to the North Platte River.

*Preliminary planning issue:*

- ◆ *Access to and transportation on BLM lands*

**Vegetation**

- ◆ Maintain riparian habitats and vegetation communities important to wildlife.
- ◆ Incorporate aggressive management techniques and strategies to control the spread of invasive, non-native plant species and encourage the use of native plant species.

*Preliminary planning issue:*

- ◆ *Vegetation, including impacts of invasive, non-native species*

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS****WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN RMP AND AN EIS?**

An RMP is a set of comprehensive, long-range decisions concerning the use and management of resources administered by the BLM. The RMP will:

1. establish goals and objectives (i.e., desired future conditions) for resource management and the measures needed to achieve those goals and objectives,
2. identify lands that are open and available for certain uses, including any restrictions, and lands that are closed to certain uses, and
3. provide comprehensive management direction for all resources and uses.

In order to revise the RMP, BLM is required by Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act to prepare an EIS. The EIS analyzes the environmental effects of a number of management alternatives, including a no action alternative and preferred alternative. Each type of alternative represents an alternative RMP.

**WHY IS THE BLM REVISING THE RMP?**

The existing RMP was completed in 1985 and is titled The Platte River RMP. Since 1985, the RMP has undergone over 50 maintenance actions that updated or amended the plan. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act requires the BLM to develop RMPs and update and revise them when appropriate. The revision process approach includes building on experience, applying new science, and working with collaborators.

**WHEN CAN I COMMENT?**

The next official public comment period will begin with the publication of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* for the Draft EIS, which is scheduled for winter 2004/2005. BLM is always open to accepting comments at anytime during the RMP revision process. For more information on how to submit comments, refer to page 4 of this newsletter.

## Casper Resource Management Plan Revision

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### What is a Cooperating Agency?

During the scoping process, the BLM initiated contact with numerous local, regional, and state agencies and offered them the opportunity to become cooperating agencies in the RMP revision process. Cooperating agencies are invited to participate in the planning process based on their having jurisdiction over similar areas as the BLM and/or having specific environmental expertise in an area impacted by the plan revision. The following agencies have committed to being cooperating agencies in the Casper RMP revision process:

- ◆ Converse County Commissioners
- ◆ Natrona County Commissioners
- ◆ Platte County Commissioners
- ◆ Converse County Conservation District
- ◆ Natrona County Conservation District
- ◆ North Platte Valley Conservation District
- ◆ South Goshen Conservation District
- ◆ Lingle-Fort Laramie Conservation District
- ◆ The State of Wyoming
- ◆ United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS),  
Pathfinder National Refuge

### How You Can Participate

Now that the scoping period is complete and we have published a Scoping Report, we are moving on to alternatives formulation.

Although the official scoping period is closed, we invite you to continue to submit comments and provide input, which we will do our best to incorporate into the next steps of the process. The RMP revision website, [www.blm.gov/rmp/casper](http://www.blm.gov/rmp/casper), will be updated with information, documents, and announcements. We encourage you to submit your additional input electronically via the comment link.

You may also submit your comments and/or questions by mail and over the phone. Feel free to call the RMP revision Project Manager, Linda Slone, anytime at 307-261-7600 or send a letter to: Linda Slone, 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY 82604-2968. We will be sending out another newsletter with updates on our progress after the alternatives formulation workshops. The next formal comment period and series of public meetings for the RMP revision and Draft EIS are not until the winter of 2004/2005.

### The Casper RMP Revision Website

Go to our Internet website at [www.blm.gov/rmp/casper](http://www.blm.gov/rmp/casper) to view Casper RMP revision and EIS documents, the latest schedule, pictures of the planning area, and more information on how to get involved.

### The Casper RMP Revision Mailing List

Individuals and groups that are already receiving this type of information in the mail will continue to be on the mailing list. Anyone wishing to be added or deleted from the list may do so by contacting Linda Slone at: 307-261-7600 or by mail to: 2987 Prospector Drive, Casper, WY 82604-2968.

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